UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly

Distr.
LIMITED

A/AC.198/1998/L.2
14 May 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Committee on Information
Twentieth session
4-15 May 1998

Draft resolutions proposed by the Chairman of the Committee on Information

Draft resolution A

Information in the service of humanity

The General Assembly

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,[1]

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,[2]

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/52/21).

[2] A/53/___.

termed "a new world information and communication order", seen as an evolving and continuous process:

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication[3] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to the General Assembly relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Welcoming the fact that the Secretary-General has established a post of Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information to head the Department of Public Information, and noting that he concurs with the view expressed in the report of the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities[4] that the information and communications function should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the Organization,

1. Reiterates its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946 in which it established the Department of Public Information;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993;

3. Expresses its concern about the trend to reduce the resources allocated to the Department of Public Information, and reiterates that all changes or reductions must be in accordance with the existing budgetary rules consistent with Article 17 of the Charter of the United Nations;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to continue to implement fully all the mandates as established by the General Assembly;

5. Takes note of the conceptual framework outlined by the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations public information activities as contained in his report on implementation of the measures regarding information and communications,[5] encourages him to further develop his proposals for the

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[3] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, Belgrade, 23 September to 28 October 1980, vol. 1, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

[4] A/AC.198/1997/CRP.1.

[5] A/AC.198/1998/2.

reorientation of United Nations activities in the area of public information and communications, taking into account the views of Member States in this regard, and requests him to submit his detailed plan thereon to the Committee on Information for consideration at its twenty-first session in 1999;

6. Emphasizes that the reorientation of the United Nations Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to the developing countries and others with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation should contribute to bridging the existing gap between the developing and developed countries in the crucial field of information and communications;

7. Takes note with appreciation of the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the formation and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peacekeeping and other field operations of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department at the planning stage of such future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other substantive departments of the Secretariat;

8. Encourages the Secretary-General to further strengthen consultative arrangements, as appropriate, between the Department of Public Information and other substantive departments of the Secretariat, in particular those dealing with development issues;

9. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the review of major publications of the Department of Public Information submitted to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session,[6] and urges the Secretary-General to exert all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of all its major publications in all official languages of the United Nations and all efforts to maintain consistent editorial independence, impartiality and accuracy, taking the necessary measures to ensure that they contain adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization and reflect divergent opinions where they occur;

10. Emphasizes that the publications should fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside the United Nations system and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner;

11. Urges the Secretary-General to exert all efforts to ensure that publications, as well as other public information products of the Department of Public Information, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

12. Calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure full and direct access for the representatives of the Member States to the briefings organized at

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[6] A/AC.198/1997/3.

Headquarters by the Office of his Spokesman and to ensure wider dissemination of the outcome of such briefings;

13. Also calls upon the Secretary-General to exert all efforts to ensure that information to be presented to the media is made available to the delegations fully and in a timely fashion;

14. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of publications produced by the Department of Public Information in the sphere of development, submitted to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session,[7] and requests him to renew his efforts to meet the needs for wider dissemination of development-related information more effectively;

15. Welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the evaluation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library submitted to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session,[8] and encourages him to continue his efforts to introduce the latest technological developments into the work of the Library with a view to ensuring that it continues and strengthens its role as a broadly accessible information resource on the United Nations for Member States and others;

16. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information in all parts of the world, in particular in developing countries and countries in transition, and especially in those countries where there is need for greater understanding about United Nations activities;

17. Reaffirms also that the United Nations information centres meet the primary objectives outlined by the Committee in its report to the General Assembly at its forty-second session;[9]

18. Takes note of the proposals contained in the report of the Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities[4] concerning United Nations information centres, including the proposal for the organizing of United Nations information centres network and the establishment of regional hubs, and notes that these proposals are being considered by the Department of Public Information;

19. Takes note also of the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the trial integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, submitted to the Committee on Information at its nineteenth session;[10]

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[7] A/AC.198/1997/4.

[8] A/AC.198/1997/2 and Add.1.

[9] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21), chap. III.D. recommendation.

[10] A/AC.198/1997/5.

20. Takes note further of the observation by his Task Force on the Reorientation of United Nations Public Information Activities regarding substantial problems that some integrated information centres have encountered in performing their information and communications functions, and accordingly requests him to take this experience into account;

21. Stresses that the future integration exercise should be carried out in a cost-effective manner and on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the views of the host country and ensuring that the information functions and the autonomy of the United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-first session;

22. Emphasizes the need to review earlier cases of integration of United Nations information centres, in accordance with paragraph 87 of its resolution 52/220 of 22 December 1997, with a view to rectifying the situation if the need arises;

23. Requests that, in developing proposals for the establishment of regional hubs, the views of Member States concerned be taken fully into account;

24. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, and invites the Secretary-General to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of these centres;

25. Takes note of the information provided by the Secretary-General on the allocation of resources to United Nations information centres in 1996,[11] and calls upon him to continue to study ways and means of rationalizing and effecting equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-first session;

26. Welcomes the action by some Member States with regard to financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals, and invites the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to consult Member States, where appropriate, on the possibility of providing the centres with additional voluntary support on a national basis, bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial requirements for the United Nations information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

27. Takes note of the requests by Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan and Slovakia for information centres or information components;

28. Recognizes the continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

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[11] A/AC.198/1997/6.

29. Expresses its full support for the wide, accurate, equal and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through the continuation of United Nations press releases in both working languages of the Secretariat, namely, English and French, and, where circumstances require, in other languages, and stresses the importance of the continued speedy issue and high quality of those press releases in both working languages;

30. Encourages the Secretary-General to continue exploring ways and means of improving the global access to airwaves of United Nations Radio and, where possible, through partnership with other media services, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping, in accordance with resolution 48/44 B, and, in that regard, requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report on his efforts to develop an international radio broadcasting capacity for the Organization, taking into account the language diversity of Member States, and to submit it to the Committee on Information as soon as possible and no later than its twenty-first session;

31. Further encourages the inclusion of programmes of the United Nations Radio, in all available languages, on the United Nations home page on the Internet;

32. Underlines the continued importance for the Department of Public Information of using traditional and mass media channels to disseminate information on the United Nations, and encourages the Department of Public Information to take full advantage of recent developments in information technologies, such as the Internet, to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the dissemination of information on the United Nations, taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

33. Welcomes the steps being undertaken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen its capacity to carry out its responsibility for both maintaining and coordinating the United Nations home page and for providing its public information content;

34. Expresses its appreciation for the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries conducted by the Department of Public Information, and calls for its further expansion to include a larger number of trainees from developing countries, as well as trainees from countries in transition;

35. Acknowledges the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing nations to disseminate information on priority issues;

36. Requests the Department of Public Information to continue to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours, as well as to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up-to-date, relevant and as technologically innovative as possible;

37. Urges the Department of Public Information to take the necessary measures, through the provision of relevant and objective information, with a view to achieving the major objectives of the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa;[12]

38. Recalls its resolutions concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, in particular resolutions 51/138 B of 13 December 1996 and 52/172 of 16 December 1997, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the consequences of this disaster;

39. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-first session, in 1999, and to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session, in 1999, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

40. Decides that, starting from the twenty-first session of the Committee on Information, preparation of the report of the Committee be carried out by an open-ended working group;

41. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

42. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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[12] A/52/871-S/1998/318.